

# Nan of Music Mountain

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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## DARING IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, DE SPAIN TELLS NAN THAT SOME DAY HE AND SHE WILL BE MARRIED—SHE DOESN'T LIKE IT.

Henry De Spain, general manager of the stage coach line running from the Thier River mines to Sleepy Cat, a railroad division town in the Rocky Mountains, is trying to rid the region of a band of horse thieves, cattle rustlers and gunmen known as the Morgan gang. They live in Morgan Gap, a fertile valley 20 miles from Sleepy Cat and near Calabasas where the coach horses are changed. De Spain has killed two of the gang and has been seriously wounded. Pretty Nan Morgan, niece of the gang leader, has saved his life and he is trying to make love to her, but receives no encouragement.

### CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Take me away, Gale," cried Nan. "Leave him here—take me home! Take me home!"

She caught her cousin's arm. "Stay right where you are," shouted Morgan, pointing at De Spain, and following Nan as she pulled him along. "When I come back, I'll give you what you're looking for."

"Bring your friends," said De Spain tauntingly. "I'll accommodate four more of you. Stop!" With one hand still on his revolver, he pointed the way. "Go down that trail first, Morgan. Stay where you are, girl, till he gets down that hill. You won't get me over her shoulder for a while yet. Move!"

Morgan took the path sullenly, De Spain covering every step he took. Behind De Spain Nan stood waiting for her cousin to get beyond earshot. "What," she whispered hurriedly to De Spain, "will you do?"

Covering Morgan, who could whirl on him at any turn in the descent, De Spain could not look at her in answer. "Looks pretty rocky, doesn't it?"

"He will start the whole gap as soon as he gets to his horse."

He looked at the darkening sky.

"They won't be very active on the job before morning."

Morgan was at a safe distance. De Spain turned to Nan. Her eyes were bent on him as if they would pierce him through. "If I save your life—"

still breathing fast, she hesitated for words—"you won't trick me—ever—will you?"

Steadily returning her appealing gaze, De Spain answered with deliberation: "Don't ever give me a chance to trick you, Nan."

"What do you mean?" she demanded, fear and distrust burning in her tone.

"My life," he said slowly, "isn't worth it."

"You know—" He could see her resolute underlip, pink with fresh young blood, quiver with intensity of feeling as she faltered. "You know what every man says of every girl—foolish, trusting easy to deceive—everything like that."

"May God wither my tongue before ever it speaks to deceive you, Nan."

"There's not a moment to lose," she said swiftly. "Listen: a trail around this mountain leads out of the gap, straight across the face of El Capitán."

"I can make it."

"A good climber can do it—I have done it. I'd even go with you, if I could."

"Why?"

She shook her head angrily at what he dared show in his eyes. "Oh, keep still—listen!"

"I know you'd go, Nan," he declared unperturbed. "But, believe me, I never would let you."

"I can't go, because to do any good I must meet you with a horse outside."

He only looked silently at her, and she turned her eyes from his gaze.

"See," she said, taking him eagerly to the back of the ledge and pointing, "follow that trail, the one to the east—you can't get lost; you can reach El Capitán before dark—it's very close. Creep carefully across El Capitán on that narrow trail, and on the other side there is a wide one clear down to the road—oh, do be careful on El Capitán!"

"I'll be careful."

"I must watch my chance to get away from the corral with a horse. If I fail it will be because I am locked up at home, and you must hide and do the best you can. How much they will surmise of this, I don't know."

"Go now, this minute," he said, restraining his words. "If you don't come, I shall know why."

She turned without speaking, and, fearless as a chamois, ran down the rocks. De Spain, losing not a moment, hobbled rapidly up along the granite-walled passage that led the way to his chance for life.

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A Venture in the Dark.

Pushing his way hastily forward when he could make haste; crawling slowly on his hands and knees when held by opposing rock; flattening himself like a leech against the face of

the precipice when the narrowing ledge left him only inches under foot; clinging with torn hands to every favoring crevice, and pausing when the peril was extreme for fresh strength, De Spain dragged his injured foot across the sheer face of El Capitán in the last shadows of the day's falling light.

Spent by his effort, De Spain reached the rendezvous Nan had indicated, as nearly as the stars would tell him, by ten o'clock. It was only after a long and doubtful hour that he heard the muffled footfalls of a horse. He stood concealed among the smaller trees until he could distinguish the outlines of the animal, and his eye caught the figure of the rider.

De Spain stepped out of the trees, and, moving toward Nan, caught her hand and helped her to the ground.

She enjoined silence, and led the horse into the little grove. Stopping well within it, she stooped and began rearranging the mufflers on the horse's head.

"I'm afraid I'm too late," she said. "How long have you been here?" She faced De Spain with one hand on the horse's shoulder.

"Did you have any falls?"

"You see I'm here. You! How could you get here at all with a horse?"

"He's hiding on both trails outside watching for you—and the moon will be up—"

De Spain made light of her fears. "I've got past them—I've got to, Nan. Don't give it a thought."

"I don't know what you'll think of me—" He heard the troubled note in her voice.

"What do you mean?"

She began to unbutton her jacket. Throwing back the revers, she felt inside around her waist, unfettered after a moment and drew forth a leather strap. She laid it in De Spain's hands. "This is yours," she said in a whisper.

He felt it questioningly, hurriedly, then with amazement. "Not a cartridge belt?" he exclaimed.

"It's your own."

"Where—?" She made no answer.

"Where did you get it, Nan?" he whispered hurriedly.

"Where you left it."

"How?" She was silent. "When?"

"Tonight."

"Have you been to Calabasas and back tonight?"

"Everybody but Sassoon is in the chase," she replied uneasily—as if not knowing what to say, or how to say it.

"They said you should never leave the gap alive—they are ready with traps everywhere. I didn't know what

to do. I couldn't bear—after what you did for me tonight—to think of your being shot down like a dog, when you were only trying to get away."

"I wouldn't have had you take a ride like that for forty belts!"

"McAlpin showed it to me the last time I was at the stage barn, hanging where you left it. He strapped the cartridges around him."

"You should never have taken that ride for it. But since you have—"

He had drawn his revolver from his waistband. He broke it now and held it out. "Load it for me, Nan."

Day was breaking when the night

boss, standing in the doorway at the Calabasas barn, saw a horseman riding at a leisurely pace up the Thier River road. The barnman scrutinized the approaching stranger closely.

There was something strange and something familiar in the outlines of the figure. But when the night rider had dismounted in front of the barn-door, turned his horse loose, and, limping stiffly walked forward on foot, the man rubbed his eyes hard before he could believe them. Then he uttered an incredulous greeting and led Henry de Spain into the barn office.

"There's friends of yours in your room upstairs right now," he declared, blushing with shock. De Spain, sitting down, forbade the barnman to disturb them, on'y asking who they were.

When he had asked half a dozen more leisurely questions and avoided answering twice as many, the barnman at De Spain's request helped him upstairs. Beside himself with excitement, the night boss turned, grinning, as he laid one hand on the doorknob and the other on De Spain's shoulder.

"You couldn't have come," he whispered loudly, "at a better time."

The entryway was dark, and from the silence within the room one might have thought its occupants, if there were such, wrapped in slumber. But at intervals a faint clicking sound could be heard. The night man threw open the door. By the light of two stage-lamps, one set on the dresser and the other on a window ledge, four men sat about a rickety table in a life-and-death struggle at cards. No voice broke the tense silence, not even when the door was thrown broadly open.

No one—neither Lefever, Scott, Frank Elpasso nor McAlpin—looked up when De Spain walked into the room and, with the night man tiptoeing behind, advanced composedly toward the group. Even then his presence would have passed unnoticed, but that Bob Scott's ear mechanically recorded the limping step and transmitted to his trained intelligence merely notice of something unusual.

Scott, picking up his cards one at a time as Lefever dealt, raised his eyes. Startling as the sight of the man given up for dead must have been, no muscle of Bob Scott's body moved. His expression of surprise slowly dissolved into a grin that mutely invited the others, as he had found out for himself, to find out for themselves.

Lefever finished his deal, threw down the pack, and picked up his hand. His suspicious eyes never rose above the level of the faces at the table; but when he had thumbed his cards and looked from one to the other of the remaining players to read the weather signals, he perceived on Scott's face an unwonted expression, and looked to where the scout's gaze was turned for an explanation of it. Lefever's own eyes, at the sight of the thinned, familiar face behind Elpasso's chair, starting, opened like full moons. The big fellow spread one hand out, his cards hidden within it, and with the other hand prudently drew down his pile of chips. "Gentlemen," he said lightly, "this game is interned." He rose and put a silent hand across the table over Elpasso's shoulder. "Henry," he exclaimed impressively, "one question, if you please—and only one: How in thunder did you do it?"

### CHAPTER XV.

#### Strategy.

One week went to repairs. To a man of action such a week is larger than ten years of service. But chained to a bed in the Sleepy Cat hospital, De Spain had no escape from one week of thinking, and for that week he thought about Nan Morgan. And the impulse that moved him the first moment he could get out of bed and into a saddle was to spur his way hard and fast to her; to make her, against a score of burly cousins, his own; and never to release her from his sudden arms again.

With De Spain to think was to do; at least to do something, but not without further careful thinking, and not without anticipating every chance of failure. And his manner was to cast up all difficulties and obstacles in a situation, brush them aside, and have his will if the heavens fell; and he now set himself, while doing his routine work every day, to do one particular thing—to see, talk to, plead with, struggle with the woman, or girl, rather—child, even, to his thoughts, so fragile she was—this girl who had given him back his life against her own marauding relatives.

His friends saw that something was absorbing him in an unusual, even an extraordinary way, yet none could arrive at a certain conclusion as to what it was. The one man in the country who could have surmised the situation between the two—the barn boss, McAlpin—if he entertained suspicion, was far too pawky to share them with anyone.

When two weeks had passed without De Spain's having seen Nan or having heard of her being seen, the conclusion urged itself on him that she was either ill or in trouble—perhaps in trouble for helping him; a moment

later he was laying plans to go and find the gap to find out.

Nothing in the way of a venture could be more foolhardy—this he admitted to himself—nothing, he consoled himself by reflecting, but something stronger than danger could justify it. Of all the mighty Morgans following within the mountain fastness he could count on but one man to help him in the slightest degree—this was the derelict, Bull Page. There was no choice but to use him, and he was easily enlisted, for the Calabasas affair had made a heroic figure of De Spain in the barrooms. De Spain, accordingly, lay in wait for the old man and intercepted him one day on the road to Sleepy Cat, walking the twenty miles patiently for his whisky.

"You must be the only man in the gap, Bull, that can't borrow or steal a horse to ride," remarked De Spain, stopping him near the river bridge.

Page pushed back the broken brim of his hat and looked up. "You wouldn't believe it," he said, imparting a cheerful confidence, "but ten years ago I had horses to lend to every man 'tween here and Thier river." He nodded toward Sleepy Cat with a wrecked smile, and by a dramatic chance the broken hat-brim fell with the words: "They've got 'em all."

"Your fault, Bull."

"Say!" Up went the broken brim, and the whiskered face lighted with a



Ten Years Ago I Had Horses to Lend Every Man 'tween Here and Thier River.

shaking smile, "you turned some trick on that Calabasas crew—some fight," Bull chuckled.

"Bull, is old Duke Morgan a Republican?"

Bull looked surprised at the turn of De Spain's question, but answered in good faith: "Duke votes 'most any ticket that's again the railroad."

"How about picking a couple of good burmen over in the gap, Bull?"

"What kind of a job y' got?"

"See McAlpin the next time you're over at Calabasas. How about that girl that lives with Duke?"

Bull's face lighted. "Nan! Say! she's a little hummer!"

"I hear she's gone down to Thier river, teaching school."

"Come by Duke's less'n three hours ago. Seen her in the kitchen makin' bread."

"They're looking for a schoolteacher down there, anyway. Much sickness in the gap lately, Bull?"

"On'y sickness I knowed lately is what you're responsible for y'self," retorted Bull with a grin. "Pity y' left any chips at all from that Calabasas job, eh?"

"See McAlpin, Bull, next time you're over Calabasas way. Here"—De Spain drew some currency from his pocket and handed a bill to Page. "Go get your hair cut. Don't talk too much—wear your whiskers long and your tongue short."

"Right-o!"

"You understand?"

"Take it from old Bull Page, he's a world's wonder of a sucker, but he knows his friends."

"But remember this—you don't know me. If anybody knows you for a friend of mine, you are no good to me. See?"

Bull was beyond expressing his comprehension in words alone. He winked, nodded, and screwed his face into a thousand wrinkles. De Spain, wheeling, rode away, the old man blinking first after him, and then at the money in his hand. He didn't profess to understand everything in the high country, but he could still distinguish the principal figures at the end of a bank-note. When he tramped to Calabasas the next day to interview McAlpin he received more advice, with a strong burr, about keeping his own counsel, and a little expensive money to run him until an opening presented itself on the pay roll.

Come one of the big moments in the life of Henry De Spain and Nan Morgan. You will want to read about it in the next installment—great stuff!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### Peaceful Conscience Best.

The accumulating of a substantial fortune can make a prosperous man, but not necessarily a happy one; a peaceful conscience is the true content, and wealth is but her golden ornament.

Street traffic in San Francisco is regulated by electric semaphores.

## SYRUP OF FIGS FOR A CHILD'S BOWELS

It is cruel to force nauseating, harsh physic into a sick child.

Look back at your childhood days. Remember the "dose" mother insisted on—castor oil, calomel, cathartics. How you hated them, how you fought against taking them.

With our children it's different. Mothers who cling to the old form of physic simply don't realize what they do. The children's revolt is well-founded. Their tender little "insides" are injured by them.

If your child's stomach, liver and bowels need cleansing, give only delicious "California Syrup of Figs." Its action is positive, but gentle. Millions of mothers keep this harmless "fruit laxative" handy; they know children love to take it; that it never fails to clean the liver and bowels and sweeten the stomach, and that a teaspoonful given today saves a sick child tomorrow.

Ask at the store for a 50-cent bottle of "California Syrup of Figs," which has full directions for babies, children of all ages and for grown-ups plainly on each bottle. Adv.

#### Not Always.

Doctor (examining recruit)—And do you always stutter like that? Recruit — No-no, sir. Only w-w-when I t-talk.

#### SOOTHES ITCHING SCALPS

And Prevents Falling Hair Do Cuticura Soap and Ointment.

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Free sample each by mail with Book. Address postcard, Cuticura, Dept. L, Boston. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

#### Not Attracted.

"Some day you'll be rich enough to retire from business."

"Give up my nice, pleasant office and stay home?" rejoined Mr. Growlcher. "I should say not."

Wright's Indian Vegetable Pills contain nothing but vegetable ingredients, which act gently as a tonic and purgative by stimulation and not by irritation. Adv.

#### In a Quandary.

"You seemed much affected by Spenser's hard-boiled story."

"I don't deny it. Spenser saw me get a ten-dollar bill changed and I was racking my brain to think up a good excuse for not lending him a quinine."

#### Soldiers Carry Oxygen.

European soldiers carry small flasks of oxygen to revive gas-stricken comrades.

#### That Knife-Like Pain

Have you a lame back, aching day and night? Do you feel sharp pains after stooping? Are the kidneys sore? Is their action irregular? Do you have headaches, backaches, rheumatic pains, feel tired, nervous, all worn-out? Use Doan's Kidney Pills—the medicine recommended by so many people in this locality. Read the experience that follows:

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